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ABSTRACT

This guide provides general information about the Achievement Testing Program as well as specific information about the design, the composition, and the scoring of the Grade 9 English Language Arts Achievement Test. The guide contains samples of writing assignments and reading selections contained in the test, as well as objectives, explanation of cognitive levels, and scoring guides for each item. The guide also presents an analysis of the target group students, explains the emphases of the language arts curriculum in Alberta (Canada) and defines acceptable and excellent levels of performance. Attached to the guide are two appendixes containing information about achievement tests and why they are administered. (KEH)

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Student Achievement Testing Program Bulletin

Grade 9 English Language Arts



1989-90 School Year

✓ *Students
First!*

Student Evaluation and Records

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Alberta
EDUCATION

September 1989

CS212243

This bulletin contains general information about the 1990 Student Achievement Testing Program, and information specific to the Grade 9 English Language Arts Achievement Test. Additional copies of this bulletin may be obtained by telephoning Alberta Education at 427-2948.

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September 1989

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PURPOSE OF THE BULLETIN

The Grade 9 English Language Arts Achievement Test will be written on June 12, 1990. This bulletin provides general information about the Achievement Testing Program as well as specific information about the design, the composition, and the scoring of the Grade 9 English Language Arts Achievement Test.

Teachers should also refer to the publication, *Grade 9 English Language Arts Curriculum Specifications (1988)*, which presents the specific content and objectives that guide the development of the test questions.

Students should have access to the information in this bulletin, particularly to the sample questions and the scoring guide.

Questions or comments regarding this bulletin should be directed to:

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GENERAL INFORMATION

Purpose of the Achievement Testing Program

The Achievement Testing Program provides Alberta Education, school jurisdictions, and the public with information significant at the provincial and local levels about student knowledge, understanding, and skills in relation to program objectives. This program is not intended to provide information to be used for student placement or promotion.

The achievement tests are administered on a four-year cycle in four subject areas: language arts, social studies, mathematics, and science; and at three grade levels: 3, 6, and 9.

Nature of the Achievement Testing Program

The achievement tests are specific to the program of studies prescribed by the Minister of Education. Curriculum specifications for each subject area, provided by the Curriculum Branch and the Language Services Branch of Alberta Education, identify the major content areas, the specific learning objectives within each content area, and the emphasis that each objective is to receive. The test questions reflect these curriculum specifications. They also reflect the standards that are implicit in the curriculum. For further information about these standards, please refer to pages 39 to 42.

Classroom teachers from across the province are extensively involved in developing and field testing the questions. The student responses are analysed after field testing to determine each question's suitability for inclusion on the achievement test. Questions may undergo several revisions before they appear on the achievement test.

The final draft of each test is examined by an Achievement Test Review Committee that includes representatives of the Alberta Teachers' Association, the Conference of Alberta School Superintendents, Alberta's post-secondary institutions, and Alberta Education.

Exemptions from the Achievement Testing Program

All students who have been taught the subject being tested are expected to participate in the Achievement Testing Program. Any exceptions should be identified by the principal and approved by the superintendent of schools.

The only students who may be excused from participating are those for whom the test is inappropriate:

1. Students who are enrolled in an approved program that has been designed for special needs students.
2. Students who were taught the subject being tested in another semester or year.
3. Students who would normally write mathematics, science, or social studies, but who are enrolled in an English as a Second Language program.
4. Students who are being taught the specific subject being tested (mathematics, science, or social studies) in a language other than English.

Exemptions for reasons other than those outlined must be approved by the Director of the Student Evaluation and Records Branch.

Note: All Grade 9 students are expected to write the Grade 9 English Language Arts Achievement Test in 1990.

Students Receiving Instruction in French

A French language arts achievement test is available and Francophone and French Immersion students are encouraged to write it. A French translation of the Grade 6 Science Achievement Test is also available. School jurisdictions are requested to identify the number of English and French versions of the achievement tests, that they require, on forms that Alberta Education will send to them by February 1, 1990. These forms must be returned through each jurisdiction office by March 9, 1990.

Administration of the Achievement Testing Program

The Achievement Testing Program is administered in accordance with *Examination Regulation 531/82* pursuant to Section 11(1)(g) of the *School Act*. The achievement tests must be administered on the scheduled dates and may not be rescheduled.

The achievement tests must remain unopened until the time of administration. Duplication of any test materials, including the test booklets and answer sheets, is expressly forbidden.

Immediately following the administration of the scheduled achievement tests, the principal must ensure that test booklets and answer sheets are forwarded to school board offices. The school board is responsible for collecting and forwarding to the Student Evaluation and Records Branch all test materials containing students' responses. Further details regarding procedures for returning these materials to the Branch will be issued when the achievement tests are delivered. For private schools, the Regional Offices of Alberta Education assume responsibility for collecting and forwarding test materials to the Student Evaluation and Records Branch. All unused testing material may be retained by the school jurisdiction.

Alberta Education will supervise the scoring of all achievement tests. The scoring of achievement tests by school personnel prior to returning test materials to the Student Evaluation and Records Branch is a violation of the *Examination Regulation* and contrary to the intent of the Achievement Testing Program.

During 1990, the achievement tests will be administered according to the following schedule:

Tuesday, June 12, 1990

Grade 3 Mathematics (a.m.)

Grade 6 Science* (a.m.)

Grade 9 English Language Arts (a.m. and p.m.)

Thursday, June 14, 1990

Grade 9 French Language Arts (a.m. and p.m.)

In 1991, the achievement tests will be administered according to the following schedule:

Tuesday, June 11, 1991

Grade 3 Science (a.m.)

Grade 6 Mathematics* (a.m.)

Grade 9 Social Studies* (a.m.)

* A French translation of this test is available. The French translation must be administered at the same time as the English version.

Reporting the Achievement Test Results

In September, 1990, a provincial report will be issued that will present the overall results for the province on major curriculum dimensions. Each jurisdiction will receive a district profile of student achievement to parallel the provincial report, as well as guidelines for interpreting the jurisdictional results in relation to provincial standards. Alberta Education will not issue individual statements of results to students; individual student profiles will be returned to superintendents.

Any students who write a test, although qualified for exemption, will not have their scores included in the provincial results. Separate jurisdiction and school reports will be prepared for these students.

Jurisdictions and schools who choose to have their Francophone and/or French Immersion program students write the Grade 6 Science Achievement Test either in English or in French translation will receive separate jurisdiction and school reports for those students. As well, the Student Evaluation and Records Branch is addressing methods of appropriately reporting these results and those for the Grade 9 French Language Arts Achievement Test on a provincial level. The preparation of a special report on results for students in French language programs is anticipated in the fall of 1990.

DESCRIPTION OF THE GRADE 9 ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS ACHIEVEMENT TEST

Following are the major points of information regarding the design of the Grade 9 English Language Arts Achievement Test:

1. The Grade 9 English Language Arts Achievement Test is designed to reflect the *Grade 9 English Language Arts Curriculum Specifications* that have been developed from the *Program of Studies for Junior High Schools, 1988*.
2. The Grade 9 English Language Arts Achievement Test is composed of two sections:

Part A: Written Response, to be administered during a two-hour period on the morning of June 12, 1990.

Part B: Reading, to be administered during a 1½ hour period on the afternoon of June 12, 1990.
3. Part A: Written Response consists of a writing assignment based on a selection of literature.
4. The booklet for Part A: Written Response includes pages labelled PLANNING, DRAFTING, and REVISED WORK. This format is designed to reflect the writing process model. Although specific marks for planning and drafting will not be allotted, markers will be advised to take planning and drafting into consideration when scoring student work.
5. Written Response will be scored for CONTENT, ORGANIZATION, SENTENCE STRUCTURE, VOCABULARY, and CONVENTIONS (see scoring guide - pages 13 to 18).
6. Students may only use an ENGLISH DICTIONARY and/or a THESAURUS while writing Part A of the test. No other type of dictionary is authorized. Students may NOT use a dictionary or thesaurus while writing Part B.
7. Part B: Reading consists of 65 multiple-choice questions based on reading selections taken from fiction, nonfiction, poetry, drama, and visual media.
8. Part B: Reading has two booklets - one containing reading passages and one containing the test questions. Answers will be recorded on a separate machine-scorable answer sheet.

PART A: WRITTEN RESPONSE

Part A: Written Response consists of a writing assignment to be directed to an audience and related to a selection of literature (fiction, nonfiction or poetry) provided in the test booklet.

The blueprint for Part A: Written Response (page 7) is followed by a sample assignment for classroom use. This sample illustrates the kind of written assignment that will appear on the Grade 9 English Language Arts Achievement Test in June 1990.

A scoring guide follows on pages 13 to 18. Teachers should discuss the sample assignment and scoring guide with their students, keeping in mind that the scoring guide is written for teachers. Consequently, technical terms will require explanation.

Development of Part A: Written Response

Test developers and teacher committees observed the following general guidelines as they developed the writing assignment and scoring guide for the Grade 9 English Language Arts Achievement Test:

1. The writing assignment and scoring guide should assess skills presented in the *Grade 9 English Language Arts Curriculum Specifications* that have been developed from the *Program of Studies for Junior High Schools, 1988*.
2. The assignment should reflect the writing process model of pre-writing (thinking and planning), writing, and revision.
3. The assignment statement should provide focus.
4. The assignment should direct the writing towards an audience to fulfil a purpose.
5. The assignment should be one that can be completed in a period of two hours, allowing some time for planning, drafting, and for revision.

Blueprint for Part A: Written Response

The blueprint that follows on page 7 outlines Part A of the Grade 9 English Language Arts Achievement Test. The blueprint delineates the categories under which summary data will be reported to school jurisdictions.

Grade 9 English Language Arts Achievement Test
Part A: Written Response
Blueprint

REPORTING CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION OF WRITING ASSIGNMENT	RANGE OF MARKS	%
<u>CONTENT (Selecting Ideas and Details to Achieve a Purpose)</u>			
The student should be able to respond to a selection of literature and communicate that response appropriately to a specified audience.			10
<u>ORGANIZATION (Organizing Ideas and Details into a Coherent Whole)</u>			
The student should be able to organize the response effectively and coherently to produce a unified composition which achieves the student's purpose for writing.	The writing assignment is a response to a selection of literature provided in the test booklet. The student may use ideas from previous experience and/or reading. The assignment establishes a purpose and an audience for the written response but allows the student to choose the structure and style.	In each reporting category, the student receives a score within the following range: 5 - EXCELLENT 4 - PROFICIENT 3 - SATISFACTORY 2 - LIMITED 1 - POOR INS - INSUFFICIENT	10 10
<u>SENTENCE STRUCTURE (Structuring Sentences Effectively)</u>			
The student should be able to use a variety of sentence types and structures to achieve clarity, interest, and emphasis.			
<u>VOCABULARY (Selecting and Using Words and Expressions Correctly and Effectively)</u>			
The student should be able to use words and expressions appropriately and effectively to communicate to the specified audience, and to achieve the student's purpose.			10
<u>CONVENTIONS (Using the Conventions of Written Language Correctly and Effectively)</u>			
The student should be able to communicate clearly by adhering to appropriate spelling, punctuation, and grammar conventions.			10

Scoring of Part A: Written Response

Selection of Markers

Part A: Written Response will be scored by Grade 9 teachers selected from those who have been recommended as markers to the Student Evaluation and Records Branch by their superintendents. To qualify for recommendation by a superintendent, a prospective marker must have taught Grade 9 English Language Arts for two or more years, currently be teaching Grade 9 English Language Arts, and have a valid permanent Alberta teaching certificate.

Superintendents will be contacted in March 1990 for their recommendations. Approximately 150 teachers will be selected on superintendents' recommendations, to ensure that there is a proportional representation from the various regions of Alberta. Markers will be contacted in April or May, 1990. The list of markers will be finalized no later than June 15, 1990.

Many more teachers may be recommended as markers by superintendents than are required by the Student Evaluation and Records Branch. Regional representation (by zone, jurisdiction, and school) and student population are the criteria considered when markers are selected for the marking session.

Dates for Scoring

Part A: Written Response will be scored in Edmonton from July 17 to 21, 1990. Group leaders will meet on Monday, July 16, 1990.

Scoring Procedures

Markers will be trained in the application of the scoring guide, and sample papers will be discussed prior to the actual scoring of Part A. Consistency in scoring will be monitored closely.

Each student's paper will be scored by one marker only. The one-marker system allows reliable results to be reported at the jurisdictional and provincial levels, but not at the individual student level. At the time of scoring, the markers will be instructed to focus upon the success of a student's writing within each scoring category. Work in the planning and drafting space will be considered in the event that the student's paper includes incomplete revised work.

Scoring Guide

The scoring guide is on pages 13 to 18. Prior to scoring, minor adjustments to the scoring guide may be made in order to ensure that the guide will serve as an effective and consistent measure of student performance as determined by rangefinders reading a random sample of the test papers, and by group leaders in their pre-scoring meeting.

Part A: Written Response -- Sample Assignment

The sample assignment that follows on pages 9 to 12 is similar in format and content to the assignment on the Grade 9 English Language Arts Achievement Test. Adequate space for planning, drafting, and revised work will be provided in the test booklet.

GRADE 9 ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS ACHIEVEMENT TEST

PART A: WRITTEN RESPONSE

TO THE TEACHER

- Please read the instructions on this page to the students.

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

- In this test, you are asked to write a response to a selection of literature that begins on page 10.
- You may use an ENGLISH LANGUAGE DICTIONARY and a THESAURUS.
- Write your ideas on the pages labelled PLANNING AND DRAFTING
- Please write your revised work in BLUE OR BLACK INK on the pages labelled REVISED WORK.
- Remember that you may make changes and corrections on your revised work.

YOU HAVE TWO HOURS TO COMPLETE THIS TEST

JUNE 1990

Part A: Written Response -- Sample Assignment (continued)

Read the following selection carefully and thoughtfully before you begin the writing assignment that follows.

from RICK HANSEN: MAN IN MOTION

He was sitting on the stage in the auditorium of the Oakridge shopping mall in Vancouver, a smile frozen on his face, praying that the fear didn't show.

In a matter of minutes he'd be wheeling down the ramp and out onto the road, his escort vehicle tucked in behind him, to begin a journey most in the room considered impossible: 24,901.55 miles through thirty-four countries in nineteen months -- in a wheelchair powered by nothing but the strength in his upper body and the conviction in his heart. Rick Hansen, paraplegic. Age: twenty-seven. Weight: 140 pounds. Condition: numb.

One by one his supporters were trooping to the microphone to make presentations, offer good wishes and tell him what a great thing he was doing -- the premier, the mayor, civic dignitaries, corporate sponsors, friends. He tried to listen, but their voices faded in and out as his mind flew in other directions. The wheelchair wasn't ready. He was injured, had been for four months, and nothing was getting any better -- not the shoulders, the elbow or the wrist. There wasn't enough money to get him past Los Angeles, let alone around the world. What was he doing here?

He looked out over the faces, and some of the numbness melted away. All these people, all the others who'd taken part in the radio telethon outside, people he knew and people he didn't, all there to support this kid who said he was going to wheelchair around the world. He knew that a lot of them probably didn't think he could do it. They were there not because he was likely to succeed, but because he had the guts to try. Somehow, that made the feeling even warmer.

The thrill of having an honour guard of my wheelchair buddies pushing with me up a final hill in Port Coquitlam, a hill as steep as any we'd encountered, and of hearing Ron Minor driving me on as I'd driven myself so many months ago on the slopes of the Siskiyous: "Push! . . . Push! . . . Push!"

The thousands and thousands who formed a human chain on both sides of the street from the suburbs to the Pacific National Exhibition grounds, our last stop before B.C. Place. The moment when I almost broke down as I heard for the first time the hauntingly beautiful new song dedicated to the Man in Motion tour, "The Dream Will Not Die."

The final turn for the trip down Cambie Street to Oakridge, touching as many hands as I could, misting up as I passed a group of patients and staff from G.F. Strong, where I'd fought and worked and forced myself to push on -- and thinking that I'd come full circle in more ways than one . . . Maybe some day I'll have it all sorted out. But not then. I was on sensory overload.

And the last right turn into Oakridge, wheeling up the podium and breaking through the ribbon that said I was home and it was done. Looking around at the team on the stage with me -- at Don and Mike and Rico and Nancy and Simon and Derrick. And Amanda. Always and forever, Amanda.

Continued

We'd done it. Together, we'd done it. The people on the stage. The part-time crew members who'd come aboard for a time and contributed so much. And Tim, who'd driven the motor home on the last leg, with Lee in there with him or hopping out to take pictures as he'd done so many times before. We'd done it, and we'd kept a promise. We said we'd start and finish together, and we had.

And there was a moment, someone else's moment, that told the story of Man in Motion as simply and truly as it was possible to be told.

Eighteen-year-old Kerris Huston, badly injured in a car accident two years earlier, pushed away the hand of a would-be helper and walked slowly and haltingly to the microphone.

Her voice was slurred. She was obviously nervous. But she spoke to me, and she proved again that the effort was worth the prize:

"One year ago I was in a wheelchair. You showed me how to reach for the stars. You gave me that encouragement to be the best I can. I thank you for letting me share a part of your dream."

Then she walked back to her chair and sat down.....

It was a warm and wonderful celebration, a meaningful recognition of and commitment to the disabled of our province and our country. For me, it capped two days as perfect as I'd dreamed they'd be when I first dared to think about the finish line. And when all the speeches were over, no one had said it better than Kerris Huston did by walking unaided across the stage at Oakridge:

"Thank you for letting me share a part of your dream."

And thank you, all of you, for sharing mine.

Rick Hansen and Jim Taylor



WRITING ASSIGNMENT

In 1973, Rick Hansen was a carefree teenager who loved sports. After a tragic accident, doctors told Rick that he would never walk again.

Rick had a dream — to complete a journey around the world in his wheelchair. His struggle to accomplish this dream offered hope and encouragement to disabled people everywhere.

Like Rick Hansen, we have all experienced difficulties when pursuing our goals or dreams. Describe a time when you encountered roadblocks when striving to attain a goal or a dream. Explain how you felt and how you dealt with those feelings.

In your writing you should

- CONSIDER your audience
- FOCUS on the purpose of your writing
- CHOOSE a form that will fulfil your purpose
- ORGANIZE your writing appropriately
- PAY ATTENTION to how you budget your time
- PROOFREAD and correct your REVISED work

NOTE:

- You may use ideas from previous experience and/or reading
- Your composition will be evaluated on WHAT you say and HOW WELL you say it (on CONTENT, ORGANIZATION, SENTENCE STRUCTURE, VOCABULARY, and CONVENTIONS)

Scoring Guide
for
Part A: Written Response

Scoring Guide Part A: Written Response

REPORTING CATEGORY: CONTENT*

When marking CONTENT, the marker should consider how effectively the writer

- establishes a purpose and considers the audience
 - fulfils the assignment
 - supports the response
-

- 5 EXCELLENT: The writer's purpose, whether stated or implied, is clearly established and sustained. The situation used by the writer to fulfil the assignment is carefully chosen and interesting. Supporting details are precise, specific, and creative. Such writing is often lively and/or imaginative.
- 4 PROFICIENT: The writer's purpose, whether stated or implied, is clearly established and generally sustained. The situation used by the writer to fulfil the assignment is appropriate. Supporting details are relevant and specific. Such writing demonstrates an attempt to go beyond the basic requirements of the assignment.
- 3 SATISFACTORY: The writer's purpose, whether stated or implied, is established but may not be sustained. The situation chosen by the writer to fulfil the assignment is appropriate but predictable. Supporting details are relevant but general. Such writing fulfils the basic requirements of the assignment but does so matter-of-factly.
- 2 LIMITED: The writer's purpose, whether stated or implied, is vaguely established and is not sustained. The situation chosen by the writer to fulfill the assignment is inappropriate and superficial. Supporting details are general and sometimes irrelevant. Such writing does not fulfil the assignment completely.
- 1 POOR: The writer's purpose is unclear. Such writing shows a confused notion of what is required of the assignment. Details are inappropriate or lacking. Such writing may be frustrating for the reader.
- INS INSUFFICIENT: The student has written so little that it is not possible to assess the content OR the marker can discern no evidence of an attempt to fulfil the assignment.

* as is appropriate at the grade 9 level

REPORTING CATEGORY: ORGANIZATION*

When marking ORGANIZATION, the marker should consider how effectively the writing demonstrates

- focus
 - coherent order
 - connections between events and/or details
 - closure
-

- 5 EXCELLENT: The introduction is purposeful and interesting, and clearly establishes an appropriate focus which is sustained throughout. Events and details are arranged in a purposeful and effective order, and coherence is maintained. Transitions, either explicit or implicit, effectively connect events and/or details. Closure is evident and purposeful.
- 4 PROFICIENT: The introduction is purposeful and clearly establishes an appropriate focus which is generally maintained throughout. Events and details are arranged in a purposeful order, and coherence is generally maintained. Transitions, either explicit or implicit, appropriately connect events and/or details. Closure is evident.
- 3 SATISFACTORY: The introduction is functional and establishes a focus which is inconsistently maintained. Events and details are arranged in a discernible order, although coherence may falter from time to time. Transitions either explicit or implicit, connect events and/or details. Closure is mechanical or artificial.
- 2 LIMITED: The introduction may lack purpose and/or may not be functional; any focus established by the writer may not be maintained. Purposeful arrangement of events and details is not clearly discernible, and coherence falters frequently. Transitions are rarely used. Closure is unrelated to the focus.
- 1 POOR: The introduction, if present, is not functional or is inappropriate; no focus is established. The arrangement of events and details is haphazard and incoherent. Transitions are lacking or are used inappropriately. Closure is inappropriate, unconnected, or missing.
- INS INSUFFICIENT: The writing has been awarded an INS for CONTENT.

* as is appropriate at the grade 9 level

REPORTING CATEGORY: SENTENCE STRUCTURE*

When marking SENTENCE STRUCTURE, the marker should consider

- the degree to which the writer has control of sentence structure
 - the effectiveness and variety of sentence type and length
-

- 5 EXCELLENT: Sentence structure is effectively and consistently controlled. Sentence type and length are effective and varied; run-on sentences and/or sentence fragments, if used, are used successfully for effect.
- 4 PROFICIENT: Sentence structure is controlled. Sentence type and length are usually effective and varied; run-on sentences and/or sentence fragments, if used, may not be used successfully for effect but do not impede meaning.
- 3 SATISFACTORY: Sentence structure is generally controlled. Sentence type and length are sometimes effective and varied; run-on sentences and/or sentence fragments, if used, occasionally impede meaning.
- 2 LIMITED: Control of sentence structure is sometimes lacking. Sentence type and length are rarely effective and varied; run-on sentences and/or sentence fragments, if used, often impede meaning.
- 1 POOR: Control of sentence structure is generally lacking. There is no deliberate variation of sentence type or length; run-on sentences and/or sentence fragments, if used, severely impede meaning.
- INS INSUFFICIENT: The writing has been awarded an INS for CONTENT.

* as is appropriate at the grade 9 level

REPORTING CATEGORY: VOCABULARY*

When marking VOCABULARY, the marker should consider

- the effectiveness and accuracy of the words and expressions selected by the writer
 - the appropriateness of the tone
-

- 5 EXCELLENT: Specific words and expressions are carefully selected with an awareness of connotative effect. Words are used accurately and deliberately. The tone is appropriate for the focus established by the writer and for the specified audience, and is controlled throughout.
- 4 PROFICIENT: Specific words and expressions show some evidence of careful selection and some awareness of connotative effect. Words are used accurately and often effectively. The tone is appropriate for the focus established by the writer and for the specified audience, and is generally controlled.
- 3 SATISFACTORY: General words and expressions are sometimes used where specific words would have been more effective. Words are generally used accurately. The tone is unimaginative, but is generally controlled.
- 2 LIMITED: General, rather than specific, words predominate. Specific words, if present, are frequently misused. The tone is not clearly established.
- 1 POOR: General words that convey only vague meanings are used. No tone has been established.
- INS INSUFFICIENT: The writer has been awarded an INS for CONTENT

* as is appropriate at the grade 9 level

REPORTING CATEGORY: CONVENTIONS*

When marking CONVENTIONS, the marker should consider the extent to which the writer has control of

- mechanics (spelling, punctuation, capitalization, etc.)
- grammar (agreement of subject-verb, pronoun antecedent, pronoun reference etc.)

PROPORTION OF ERROR TO LENGTH AND COMPLEXITY OF RESPONSE SHOULD ALSO BE CONSIDERED.

- | | | |
|------------------|---------------|---|
| 5 | EXCELLENT: | The writing is essentially free from errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar. Any errors that are present do not reduce the clarity of the communication. |
| 4 | PROFICIENT: | The writing has few errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar. Errors that are present seldom reduce the clarity of communication. |
| 3 | SATISFACTORY: | The writing has occasional errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar. These errors may occasionally reduce the clarity of communication. |
| 2 | LIMITED: | The writing has frequent errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar. These errors often reduce the clarity of communication. |
| 1 | POOR: | The writing has numerous errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar that are both noticeable and jarring. These errors severely reduce the clarity of communication. |
| INS INSUFFICIENT | | The writing has been awarded an INS for CONTENT. |

* as is appropriate at the grade 9 level

PART B: READING

Part B: Reading consists of 65 multiple-choice questions based on reading selections from fiction, nonfiction, poetry, drama and visual media. The reading selections and questions are in separate booklets so that complete works may be used as often as is possible.

The achievement test blueprint for Part B: Reading (page 20) is followed by 26 sample questions. These questions illustrate the nature and complexity of questions that appear on the Grade 9 English Language Arts Achievement Test. They do not, however, reflect the exact emphases indicated in the achievement test blueprint (page 20) or the projected achievement test mean of 65%. The key and question information for the sample questions are on pages 37 and 38.

Development of Part B: Reading

Reading selections were chosen according to the following general guidelines:

- Reading selections should contain a beginning, a middle and an end.
- Complete works rather than excerpts should be used whenever possible.
- Reading selections should reflect the interests of the majority of Grade 9 students.
- Reading selections should be of appropriate difficulty for Grade 9 students.
- Canadian material should be used extensively.

The following guidelines provided direction for question development:

- Questions related to each reading selection should be arranged in an order similar to the events in the selection, whenever practical.
- The cognitive levels of literal understanding, judgment, and inferential understanding should be assessed by the test questions (see page 21).
- Only questions dealing with significant aspects of the reading selections should be asked.

Blueprint for Part B: Reading

The blueprint for Part B: Reading (page 20) shows the reporting categories and cognitive levels under which questions are classified, and indicates the number of questions in each category.

- So that meaningful results of student achievement can be reported, each reporting category — Attending to Details, Identifying the Organization of Ideas, Associating Meanings and Synthesizing Ideas — should be represented by at least six questions, where possible.

GRADE 9 ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS PART A: READING
BLUEPRINT

REPORTING CATEGORY	CROSS-REFERENCE TO CURRICULUM SPECIFICATIONS	COGNITIVE LEVEL			NUMBER OF QUESTIONS	% OF TEST *
		LITERAL UNDERSTANDING	JUDGMENT	INFERENTIAL UNDERSTANDING		
1. <u>Attending to Details</u> The student should be able to construct meaning from prior experience and by attending to and interpreting details related to format cues and character (actions, motives, and values), setting, action and events, conflict, and mood in a reading selection.	Concepts 10.2 11.1 14.1,.3,.4 23.3 24.5 25.1 26.1,.2,.5 28.3,.4 29.2,.3,.4,.5,.6 30.2				25	40%
2. <u>Identifying the Organization of Ideas</u> The student should be able to identify and understand the relationship of the author's intention and point of view in a reading selection to the choice of form and writing style and to organizational methods such as: chronological order, cause/effect, foreshadowing, flashback and comparison/contrast.	Concepts 10.3,.4 11.2 12.2 14.2 25.8,.10 27.1 28.1,.2,. 5,.6				12-15	20%
3. <u>Associating Meanings</u> The student should be able to associate meanings of words and expressions from prior knowledge and contextual clues, and determine the meaning and effect of the more common types of figurative language in a reading selection.	Concepts 23.3 24.5 25.1,.7 26.1,.4 27.1,.4				12-15	20%
4. <u>Synthesizing Ideas</u> The student should be able to synthesize ideas from the entire reading selection in order to deduce the main idea, to construct meaning, and to predict plausible outcomes or conclusions.	Concepts 10.1,.3,.4 11.1 23.3 26.1,.2,.3,.4.5,.6 27.2,.3 29.6				12-15	20%
		10%	30%	60%	65%	100%
		(65 questions)				

*Percentages are approximate and will vary according to the reading selections chosen

Explanation of Cognitive Levels

- Literal Understanding

Questions listed in the blueprint under Literal Understanding require the student to identify or to remember, either by recall or recognition, supporting details and cause-and-effect relationships that are directly stated in a reading selection.

- Judgment

Questions listed in the blueprint under Judgment require the student to make judgments about the relative importance or value of the following: main ideas, supporting details, words or figurative language, contributions of organizational patterns and devices, and conclusions to be drawn after reading a selection.

Judgment questions ask the students to select the BEST answer. In such questions, each alternative has a measure of truth. The student must evaluate the alternatives in the context of the reading selection in order to select the BEST answer.

- Inferential Understanding

Questions listed in the blueprint under Inferential Understanding require the student to use background experience, and analysis, interpretation, and extrapolation to understand the meanings, details, and relationships that are implied in a reading selection.

Part B: Reading -- Sample Reading Selections

I. Read "Thieving Raffles" and answer questions 1 to 6 on pages 29 and 30.

THIEVING RAFFLES

Anybody know how to make a delicious Christmas dinner out of old turkey raffle tickets?

5 That's what we've got at our house. No turkey. Just raffle tickets. Big raffle tickets, little raffle tickets, blue ones, red ones, yellow ones. My wallet is full of them. No money. Just raffle tickets.

The turkey raffle tickets cost more this year, too.

10 Two bits each, some of them. This year we paid more for the turkey we don't get to eat than we paid for the turkey we didn't get to eat last year. Never before have so few paid so much for sweet nothing at all.

For many years I have bought my turkey raffle tickets according to a system. The system is infallible. It never wins.

15 Sometimes I buy the last ticket in the book. Sometimes I buy a ticket with a number whose figures add up to three, the way I add. Once I bought a ticket from a girl because she had a nice round figure. That one cost me plenty before I was through. I could have bought a whole turkey farm with the big fat upshot of that raffle ticket.

20 Anyhow, none of these devices works. The turkey is always won by some playboy who didn't even consult his astrological chart before making the investment.

Some people are born lucky. They usually look like Bing Crosby, have a golf handicap of four and are married to a lovely woman who has given them two children -- a boy and a girl.

25 But to get back to the turkey raffle tickets. I remember we did win once. That was about fifteen years ago, and we won two turkeys for the same Christmas. Instead of Lady Luck's smiling on us regularly, she turned around for this one bellylaugh.

30 We found we didn't have a pan large enough to hold the (first) turkey, so we bought a new pan. Once we got the turkey into the pan we found it wouldn't go into the oven. The top of the oven caught the turkey a good two inches below the crest of the breast bone, so for a while there it looked as though we might have to build a fire in the bathtub.

35 I think we finally got the turkey in by laying it on its side. Or maybe it was by laying the stove on its side. Anyway, we cooked it and stuffed ourselves with it and on Boxing Day it still looked in better shape than any member of the family.

40 That turkey was around so long we grew to hate all forms of bird life. After the first week Mother didn't even bother to camouflage it as chicken à la king or Irish stew. We just tore at the great carcass in cold fury, uttering low, inhuman cries.

I forget what happened to the second turkey.

Continued

45 Well, that has never happened again. This year we have had to buy
a wild duck for Christmas dinner. It isn't really a wild duck.
Actually it's a tame duck that went mad with hunger. We found it
hanging in the butcher shop with a note beside it explaining why it did
it. "Life isn't all it's quacked up to be," the duck had written.

50 Some of you people won't believe that was what the duck wrote and
will say I just made it up. These are the same people that don't
believe in Santa Claus. There are too many cynics in the world, and
too many turkey raffle tickets. I'd like to see anybody disprove that.

Eric Nicol

- II. Read "Flight of the Roller Coaster" and answer questions 7 to 12 on pages 31 and 32.

FLIGHT OF THE ROLLER COASTER

Once more around should do it, the man confided . . .

and sure enough, when the roller-coaster reached the peak
of the giant curve about me, screech of its wheels
almost drowned out by the shriller cries of the riders,

- 5 instead of the dip and plunge with its landslide of screams,
it rose in the air like a movieland magic carpet,
some wonderful bird,
and without fuss or fanfare swooped slowly across
the amusement park,
10 over Spook's Castle, ice-cream booths, shooting-gallery.
And losing no height

made the last yards above the beach, where the cucumber-cool
brakeman in the last seat saluted
a lady about to change from her bathing-suit.

- 15 Then, as many witnesses reported, headed leisurely
out over the water,
disappearing all too soon behind a low-flying flight of clouds.

Raymond Souster

III. Read "Birthday Party" and answer questions 13 to 18 on pages 32 and 33.

BIRTHDAY PARTY

They were a couple in their late thirties, and they looked unmistakably married. They sat on the banquette opposite us in a little narrow restaurant, having dinner. The man had a round, self-satisfied face, with glasses on it; the woman was fadingly pretty, in a big hat. There was nothing conspicuous about them, nothing particularly noticeable, until the end of their meal, when it suddenly became obvious that this was an Occasion — in fact, the husband's birthday, and the wife had planned a little surprise for him.

It arrived in the form of a small but glossy birthday cake, with one pink candle burning in the centre. The headwaiter brought it in and placed it before the husband, and meanwhile the violin-and-piano orchestra played "Happy Birthday to You" and the wife beamed with shy pride over her little surprise, and such few people as there were in the restaurant tried to help out with a pattering of applause. It became clear at once that help was needed, because the husband was not pleased. Instead he was hotly embarrassed, and indignant at his wife for embarrassing him.

You looked at him and you saw this and you thought, "Oh, now, don't be like that!" But he was like that, and as soon as the little cake had been deposited on the table, and the orchestra had finished the birthday piece, and the general attention had shifted from the man and woman, I saw him say something to her under his breath — some punishing thing, quick and curt and unkind. I couldn't bear to look at the woman then, so I stared at my plate and waited for quite a long time. Not long enough, though. She was still crying when I finally glanced over there again. Crying quietly and heart-brokenly and hopelessly, all to herself, under the gay big brim of her best hat.

Katharine Brush



- IV. Read "The Inspector General" and answer questions 19 to 25 on pages 34 and 35.

THE INSPECTOR GENERAL, Act II, Scenes iv-vi

SCENE: A room in a provincial hotel in Russia; early nineteenth century.

- SERVANT: The manager sent me to see what you want.
KHLESTAKOV: Ah, good to see you, old man. How are things going?
SERVANT: All right, thank you.
KHLESTAKOV: Is business booming here at the hotel?
5 SERVANT: Yes, sir. Thank you, sir.
KHLESTAKOV: Lots of guests?
SERVANT: Adequate, sir.
KHLESTAKOV: Well fine! You know, it's almost past dinner time and I
haven't eaten yet. Do a good turn and bring me a tray immediately,
10 or I shall be late for my appointment.
SERVANT: Sorry, sir, but the manager will charge no more dinners to
you. In fact, today he almost sent a complaint about you to the
police.
KHLESTAKOV: A complaint? That's ridiculous. After all, I've got to
15 eat or I shall starve. The truth of the matter is, I'm quite
famished!
SERVANT: Be that as it may. He said he wasn't going to give you
anything else until you had cleared up your bill.
KHLESTAKOV: Well, can't you talk to him? Put in a good word for me!
20 SERVANT: But what can I say?
KHLESTAKOV: Talk to him seriously and tell him I've got to have
something to eat. The money -- well -- tell him just because his
kind can go all day without food, doesn't mean that other people
can. Preposterous idea!
25 SERVANT: Yes, sir, I'll tell him. (Exit SERVANT)
KHLESTAKOV: How disgusting if he refuses to send up dinner. I've
never been so hungry. I wonder if I could pawn my clothes? My
trousers? No, I'd rather not eat than go home without my
Petersburg suit. Too bad that Yokhim wouldn't let me rent a
30 carriage. It would have been great to drive up in style to a
landlord's house with my carriage lanterns on and Osip behind in
uniform. How impressed they would be. "Who is it? Who has
come?" Then my footman would announce (he imitates footman) "Ivan
Alexandrovich Khlestakov of Petersburg. Will you receive him?"
35 Those country dunces, though, wouldn't even know what that meant.
If any farmer visits then, he stumbles right into the living room
like a bear. Hmm. I'd go up to a pretty young girl and say
"Mademoiselle, I am so happy -- " Huh! (He spits) I'm so hungry
I feel nauseated. (Enter the SERVANT)
40 KHLESTAKOV: Yes, what do you want?
SERVANT: I'm bringing dinner.

Continued

KHLESTAKOV (*Claps his hands and jumps into his chair*): Ah, dinner. At last, dinner.

45 SERVANT: The manager says this is the last dinner he will send you.

KHLESTAKOV: Oh, the manager. Who cares about the manager. What's there to eat?

SERVANT: Soup and roast beef.

KHLESTAKOV: You mean that is all?

50 SERVANT: That's all, sir.

KHLESTAKOV: Nonsense. I won't hear of it. That's not enough.

SERVANT: On the contrary, sir, the manager says it's far too much!

KHLESTAKOV: But what about the gravy?

SERVANT: There isn't any.

55 KHLESTAKOV: Why not? When I passed the kitchen I saw them making a lot, and earlier in the dining room, I saw two short looking men eating salmon and other good things.

SERVANT: Well, there is some and then there isn't.

KHLESTAKOV: What do you mean?

60 SERVANT: I mean, there isn't any, sir.

KHLESTAKOV: No salmon? No gravy? No chops?

SERVANT: No, sir. Well, yes, sir. But only for those who pay, sir.

KHLESTAKOV: Oh, you, knucklehead. Why should I go hungry while they eat. Aren't I as good as they?

65 SERVANT: No, sir. Well, yes sir, but the difference is, they have money.

KHLESTAKOV: Oh, it's a waste of time to argue with you. (*Tastes soup*) What awful soup. Why, it's only hot water you've poured into the bowl. There's no taste at all, only a dreadful smell. I'll not eat it! You must bring me some other.

70 SERVANT: Sorry, sir. The manager said if you didn't like this, you could go without.

KHLESTAKOV (*Holding his bowl and plate*): Well, then leave it. Only, don't talk like that to me. I'll not have it. (*Tastes soup again*) Heavens, what soup. (*Continues to eat it*) I'm probably the first to ever eat soup like this. Why, there's even a feather floating on top. (*Spoons a piece of chicken in the soup*) Ah, even the fowl is foul. Pass me the roast beef. Here, Osip, there's some so left for you. (*Cuts meat*) You call this roast beef? It most certainly is not!

80 SERVANT: Then what is it?

KHLESTAKOV: Only the devil knows, but it is not beef. It tastes more like leather. Cheaters! What they won't give a person. Why, my jaw aches from chewing just one bite. (*Picks teeth with finger*) It's even worse than tree bark. I can't get out. Such food is enough to ruin one's teeth (*Wipes mouth with napkin*). Isn't there anything else?

85 SERVANT: No, sir.

KHLESTAKOV: What cheaters they are. Not even dessert. It's terrible the way they always take advantage of travelers!

Nikolai Gogol
adapted by Fran Tanner

Part B: Reading -- Sample Questions

- I. Read "Thieving Raffles" on pages 22 and 23 and answer questions 1 to 6.
1. The meaning of the word "infallible" as it is used in line 13 is similar to the meaning of the word
 - A. logical
 - B. obvious
 - C. debatable
 - D. dependable
 2. The writer establishes a rapid pace by using
 - A. humorous words
 - B. short sentences
 - C. cause and effect
 - D. questions and answers
 3. The word that would BEST replace the phrase "in better shape" (lines 38-39) is
 - A. healthier
 - B. stronger
 - C. fresher
 - D. nicer
 4. That the speaker is not mathematically minded is BEST suggested by
 - A. "never before have so few paid so much for sweet nothing at all" (lines 10-11)
 - B. "whose figures add up to three, the way I add" (line 15)
 - C. "we found it wouldn't go into the oven" (lines 31-32)
 - D. "caught the turkey a good two inches below the crest of the breast bone" (lines 32-33)

Continued

5. The speaker's sense of humor is indicated by the statement
- A. "I have bought my turkey raffle tickets according to a system."
(lines 12-13)
 - B. "I remember we did win once. That was about fifteen years ago, and we won two turkeys for the same Christmas." (lines 26-28)
 - C. "I think we finally got the turkey in by laying it on its side. Or maybe it was by laying the stove on its side." (lines 36-37)
 - D. "These are the same people that don't believe in Santa Claus."
(lines 51-52)
6. The writer's MAIN purpose in writing this story is to
- A. describe to readers the results of winning a turkey raffle
 - B. acquaint readers with the problems of cooking large turkeys
 - C. persuade readers that buying raffle tickets on turkeys is a worthless investment
 - D. entertain readers by illustrating that buying turkey raffle tickets can be disastrous

- II. Read "Flight of the Roller Coaster" on page 24 and answer questions 7 to 12.
7. The poet's choice of words in lines 3 and 4 appeals MOST to the reader's sense of
- A. sight
 - B. touch
 - C. motion
 - D. hearing
8. The quotation that illustrates the shift from reality to fantasy is
- A. "screech of its wheels almost drowned out by the shriller cries of the riders" (lines 3-4)
 - B. "with its landslide of screams, it rose in the air like a movieland magic carpet" (lines 5-6)
 - C. "without fuss or fanfare swooped slowly across the amusement park" (lines 8-9)
 - D. "headed leisurely out over the water, disappearing all too soon behind a low-flying flight of clouds" (lines 15-17)
9. The BEST meaning for "fanfare" in line 8 is
- A. joy
 - B. fear
 - C. nonsense
 - D. ceremony
10. The description of the brakeman as "cucumber-cool" (line 12) suggests that he is
- A. alert and serious
 - B. alone and isolated
 - C. happy and careless
 - D. nonchalant and calm

Continued

11. As the roller coaster disappears, the "many witnesses" (line 15) MOST LIKELY have a feeling of
- A. gratitude that they are safely on the ground
 - B. regret that the magical moment does not last
 - C. alarm at the unexplained loss of their friends
 - D. loneliness as they watch their friends fly away
12. The experience described in this poem can BEST be summarized as an
- A. unknown voyage
 - B. extraordinary adventure
 - C. imaginary escape from reality
 - D. unexpected thrill of a lifetime

III. Read "Birthday Party" on page 25 and answer questions 13 to 18.

13. This selection is developed MAINLY through
- A. narration
 - B. flashback
 - C. exposition
 - D. foreshadowing
14. That the couple is married is
- A. emphasized by the narrator
 - B. dismissed by the narrator
 - C. assumed by the narrator
 - D. stated by the narrator
15. The reason for the capital O on the word "Occasion" (line 7) is to indicate
- A. setting
 - B. romance
 - C. emphasis
 - D. exaggeration
16. The line that reveals the change of mood in the story is
- A. "'Happy Birthday to You' and the wife beamed with shy pride over her little surprise," (lines 13-14)
 - B. "It became clear at once that help was needed, because the husband was not pleased." (lines 16-17)
 - C. "I saw him say something to her under his breath -- some punishing thing quick and curt and unkind." (lines 23-24)
 - D. "Crying quietly and heart-brokenly and hopelessly, all to herself, under the gay big brim of her best hat." (lines 27-29)

Continued

17. The reader's reactions to the man's punishing remark and the woman's response to it will MOST LIKELY be ones of
- A. criticism and humiliation
 - B. anger and embarrassment
 - C. anger and compassion
 - D. criticism and grief
18. The MAIN purpose of this selection is to show
- A. the sensitivity of the woman
 - B. how some people are embarrassed in public
 - C. that birthdays can create negative feelings
 - D. the injustice of the man's response to the surprise

- IV. Read "The Inspector General" on pages 26 and 27 and answer questions 19 to 25.
19. In lines 21 to 24, the dramatist MOST LIKELY wishes to draw the reader's attention to Khlestakov's
- A. arrogance
 - B. persistence
 - C. state of hunger
 - D. willingness to pay
20. The word CLOSEST in meaning to "Preposterous" (line 24) is
- A. absurd
 - B. foolish
 - C. fantastic
 - D. inappropriate
21. In lines 26 to 39, the audience that is being ridiculed is the
- A. rural nobles
 - B. urban workers
 - C. rural peasants
 - D. urban merchants
22. In lines 66 to 86, the dramatist is poking fun at Khlestakov's image of himself as
- A. a critic of employees
 - B. an expert on etiquette
 - C. a witty conversationalist
 - D. an authority of fine food
23. The statement that MOST CLEARLY reveals Khlestakov's avoidance of the reality of his situation is
- A. "I've got to eat or I shall starve." (lines 14-15)
 - B. "Those country dunces," (line 35)
 - C. "Who cares about the manager." (line 45)
 - D. "It's terrible the way they always take advantage of travelers!" (lines 88-89)

Continued

24. The last sentence BEST illustrates Khlestakov's

- A. self-deception
- B. indifference
- C. frustration
- D. bitterness

25. In this passage, Khlestakov can be described as

- A. snobbish and judgmental
- B. sensitive but aggressive
- C. outspoken and flattering
- D. unreasonable but responsible

V. Read the cartoon and answer question 26.



26. The cartoon achieves its humour by the
- A. truth of the caption
 - B. woman's lack of knitting ability
 - C. facial expressions of the characters
 - D. man's incorrect interpretation of the problem

PART B: READING (MULTIPLE-CHOICE) SAMPLE QUESTIONS

KEY AND DESCRIPTION

Question No.	Keyed Response	Difficulty Level*	Reporting Category**	Cognitive Level	Cross-Reference to Curriculum Specifications Concept(s)
1	D	.430	Associating Meanings	Literal	24, 25
2	B	.530	Organization	Literal	27
3	A	.640	Associating Meanings	Judgment	24, 25
4	B	.828	Details	Judgment	25, 26, 29
5	C	.873	Details	Inferential	25, 26, 29
6	D	.700	Synthesizing	Inferential	23, 26
7	D	.842	Associating Meanings	Judgment	26
8	B	.743	Organization	Inferential	25, 27, 28
9	D	.272	Associating Meanings	Judgment	24, 25
10	D	.711	Details	Inferential	25, 26, 29
11	B	.416	Synthesizing	Judgment	23, 26, 27
12	C	.720	Synthesizing	Judgment	23, 26, 27
13	A	.473	Organization	Judgment	25, 28
14	C	.538	Details	Literal	26, 29
15	C	.556	Organization	Inferential	28
16	B	.763	Organization	Inferential	25, 27, 28
17	C	.387	Synthesizing	Judgment	23, 26, 27
18	D	.480	Synthesizing	Judgment	23, 26, 27

KEY AND DESCRIPTION (continued)

Question No.	Keyed Response	Difficulty Level*	Reporting Category**	Cognitive Level	Cross-Reference to Curriculum Specifications Concept(s)
19	A	.351	Details	Judgment	25, 26, 29
20	A	.602	Associating Meanings	Judgment	24, 25
21	C	.394	Details	Inferential	25, 26, 28, 29
22	D	.775	Details	Inferential	24, 25, 26, 29
23	D	.480	Details	Judgment	24, 25, 26, 29
24	A	.437	Details	Judgment	24, 25, 26, 29
25	A	.839	Synthesizing	Inferential	23, 26, 27
26	D	.731	Synthesizing	Inferential	10, 11, 12

* The difficulty level of the question indicates the percentage of students who answered the question correctly on a field test or an estimate of difficulty if the question has been revised. For example, a difficulty level of 0.431 indicates that 43.1% of the students answered the question correctly.

** See the blueprint on page 20 for a description of each reporting category.

Purpose of Performance Standards

The Grade 9 performance standards statement is intended to help educators develop a shared, province-wide understanding of acceptable and excellent levels of achievement for Grade 9 Language Arts.

Presented on the following pages are DRAFT statements which describe what is expected of Grade 9 students who are achieving at an acceptable or an excellent level of performance on independent work at the end of the Grade 9 English Language Arts Program. Once finalized, these statements will represent the standards of performance against which provincial and/or local levels of student achievement will be compared. By comparing actual provincial results to expected provincial performance standards, it can be decided if achievement is in fact "good enough." The standards of performance inherent in these statements are derived from the goals and objectives of Grade 9 English Language Arts as presented in the *Program of Studies for Junior High Schools, 1988*.

Through discussions held with educators in developing the achievement tests, the expectation exists that 85 per cent of all students will meet acceptable levels of performance but only 15 per cent will achieve a level of excellence. We are interested in knowing if these standards of performance and the expectations of how many students will meet these levels of performance are appropriate. Your views regarding these expectations would be appreciated and may be forwarded to:

Dennis Belyk
Associate Director
Achievement Testing and Diagnostic Evaluation Programs
Student Evaluation and Records Branch
Alberta Education
Box 43
11160 Jasper Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta
T5K 0L2

FAX: 422-4200

GRADE 9 ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

STANDARD STATEMENTS

Target Group

The Grade 9 English Language Arts program is designed for all students in grade 9, except those who are enrolled in special education programs such as the Integrated Occupational Program. It should be noted that, during the middle years, the language development of students is "not only connected to cognitive advances but nourished by the life within and around each student" (Gutteridge, 1987). Because these students have been through periods of rapid growth and have experienced a vast range of social, mental, and emotional development, we can expect their achievement to be uneven. Even the best students do not achieve at an excellent level at all times; for example, they may be able to handle oral language at the formal level but written language only at the concrete level.

Major Emphases of the Course

The developmental framework for language arts recognizes that students need to make sense out of their world and communicate their feelings and experiences. The vehicle for development of this understanding and communication is the study of literature and other kinds of print and non-print material*. Students need to read and hear literature and view film and video productions. They need to talk about their ideas, feelings, experiences, and the literature that they read, hear, and view. They also need to write for a variety of purposes and audiences in appropriate and varied forms. These "arts" of language (reading, writing, listening, viewing, and speaking) are integrated throughout the language arts curriculum. Experience and development of skill in any of these language arts can occur only if all of the "arts of language" are integrated to reinforce the learning; that is, students will become better writers only if they read and use talk to learn. Both content and process, that is, both what students need to know and what they are able to do, are emphasized in the language arts program. Process is taught in a holistic way, stressing concepts and skills as part of an overall process, not in isolation or as ends in themselves.

Acceptable Level of Performance

Students who are achieving at an acceptable level of performance in Grade 9 Language Arts generally do not produce their best work when working independently. These students are usually able to sustain interest in reading, viewing, and listening to stories, drama, and documentaries of shorter length only.

* Students develop and achieve according to the literature chosen, the quality and complexity of the literature, and how it is taught.

Students achieving an acceptable level of performance deal with details and ideas which are presented in a direct manner but are not able to deal with more complicated, unfamiliar details and ideas; for example, they may be able to organize and present a variety of visual messages using media such as collages, slides, dramatizations, or models, but their presentations may lack focus, direction, and originality. They can deal with a familiar idea in writing such as the narration of a personal experience; however, they may have difficulty when confronted with writing tasks which require more complex and/or original thought. Because they are uncertain about how to elaborate, they write with minimal, generalized, and unimaginative detail.

Such students organize concrete, factual material that contains simple ideas. They define more complex techniques of literary structure or organization such as cause and effect, foreshadowing, flashback, and contrast and comparison but are unable to apply that knowledge consistently to unfamiliar literature or use that knowledge to apply such techniques consciously in their own writing.

Most students who are achieving an acceptable level of performance can analyse and synthesize ideas only if the context is familiar and the experience is close in time to their own experiences. While their skills may be sufficiently well developed to permit them to accomplish what is assigned if the task is rudimentary, as the tasks become increasingly complex, students require conscious effort, and/or assistance to be successful.

To be deemed to have attained an acceptable standard in Grade 9 Language Arts, students must demonstrate that they can independently understand, organize, and articulate course-related ideas and concepts in a concrete, direct, personal, and relatively uncomplicated manner. They are able to read relatively simple, short novels, non-fiction selections, narrative poems and clearly and correctly articulate (orally and in writing) the main idea, sequence of events, key details, and features of the characters and form.

Excellent Level of Performance

Most students who are achieving an excellent level of performance in Grade 9 Language Arts are confident learners who read widely (mystery, romance, adventure, speculative fiction, poetry) to search for information from text or just for pleasure.

Those achieving an excellent level of performance have the ability to read, write, and reflect on print and non-print text from many perspectives; for example, they can distinguish between fact and opinion and are aware of how the opinions expressed in the media affect the views, attitudes, and actions of society. They deal with abstract and complex details and ideas, and readily take risks with unfamiliar material. They analyse and evaluate ideas received from a wide variety of materials and appreciate how analysis can deepen appreciation of the work. These students express this analysis through a variety of modes (writing, oral presentation, drawing, dramatization) with pertinent, specific, and imaginative detail.

Students achieving at an excellent level of achievement coherently develop and organize more abstract, complex material. They can establish an appropriate focus for communication and select appropriate ideas and language to suit different purposes and audiences. Without teacher assistance, they can identify areas in their writing which need to be revised and/or elaborated. The final product is essentially free from error.

Those students who are achieving at an excellent level of performance generally demonstrate interest, enthusiasm, and imagination when dealing with details and ideas which demand complex thought and understanding - even when encountering difficulties. This attitude is especially apparent when the students are sharing their experiences with others.

APPENDIX

"Why Do We Have to Give These Tests?" Achievement Tests and the Whole Language Success Story

Peggy Skett and Ruth Hayden

"Why do we have to give those tests?" is a question echoed in many staff rooms at the beginning of June. Frequently, those who are most forceful in voicing their concerns about Provincial Achievement Tests are those Grade Three teachers who adhered to the whole language philosophy. Comments such as "They don't fit with the way I teach"; "They are a waste of time"; "My kids don't know how to do those tests"; "They only measure product, not process" are commonplace as the testing date approaches. These teachers are not against evaluation per se; rather they are reluctant to accept an evaluation tool which they feel has little validity with respect to their teaching philosophies.

Evaluation is defined as a judgement made about student performance in relation to defined outcomes. It is an umbrella or inclusive term which encompasses other terms like assessment, diagnosis, and interpretation. Evaluation is the process of judging the value of what has been assessed. Assessment occurs in many different ways — all providing information about what a student has learned. Standardized tests (to which Provincial Achievement Tests belong) are one kind of assessment. Other less formal types are anecdotal records, observational checklists, and accumulated files of student work. As an achievement test for one of four subject areas is given annually to all Grade Three students in the Province, it seems reasonable and fair to examine the justification for concerns such as those noted above.

WHY DO I HAVE TO GIVE STANDARDIZED TESTS?

The purpose of standardized testing is to provide for valid comparisons across groups — among schools and among school jurisdictions throughout the province. A perfect comparison may not be possible, however, because teachers of young children naturally give prompts to their students as they do the test, in spite of the administration manual directions. Just one little prompt can put one group at an advantage.

Standardized tests are used to provide information about how well student learning outcomes are being achieved. These tests provide one measure of accountability and are a way of reporting what is happening in our schools to the rest of society by informing both the public and ourselves about the strengths and weaknesses of our programs.

HOW VALID IS THE TEST IF MY STUDENTS DON'T NORMALLY EXPERIENCE THIS KIND OF SITUATION?

It is possible that the testing experience might not be valid, especially for Grade 3 children in whole language classrooms. The test itself may not reflect meaningful language experiences through which students are provided a total context for reading and writing. Since testing is not a common experience for such young children, Alberta Education actually states in their Student Achievement Testing Program Bulletin that teachers should prepare their students for the testing situation by explaining the purpose of the test beforehand and giving their students the sample questions contained in the bulletin. Students should have practice with the test format and should not meet it without any preparation. Just as teachers prepare their students for a wide variety of experiences such as street safety at Halloween, turn-taking during group play, or how to borrow books from the library, so too they can assist their students in coping with the requirements needed to do the test in competent ways.

AREN'T STUDENTS THIS AGE TOO YOUNG TO BE TESTED?

For some students in Grade Three -- yes, there are some reasons for which the testing experience is inappropriate, for example, ESL students or others who have particular language deficits. However, Alberta Education makes provisions for those students whom teachers feel the test would be inappropriate and allows them to not write the test, by permission of the district superintendent.

WHO MAKES UP THESE TESTS?

The tests are created by classroom teachers who are considered to be knowledgeable about specific subject content. In the case of preparing Alberta Education achievement testing, teachers, consultants, and Alberta Education personnel are involved. The process of development is quite lengthy. Questions are created according to those curriculum specifications previously set out by Alberta Education. The questions are grouped into tests which are piloted throughout the province. Based upon several piloting efforts, the actual test is composed of those questions which have been revised a number of times. The final draft is examined by an Achievement Test Review Committee which includes representatives from the ATA, Council of Alberta School Superintendents, Alberta post-secondary institutions, and Alberta Education.

Alberta Education gives all teachers in the province a mandate in the form of educational outcomes of what it expects students to learn in school. In other words, teachers are expected to provide their students with those learning opportunities which will allow them to understand the various curricula. The teaching methods and curriculum implementation are not dictated. Only the outcomes of the teaching/learning process are measured.

WHAT IF I HAVEN'T TAUGHT A PARTICULAR SKILL OR UNIT?

If we have followed the program of studies, then this is no problem. Remember, the test questions are aligned with provincial outcomes. By examining the curriculum guides and by planning our teaching to meet the demands of these guides regardless of our education philosophies or methodologies, we can be sure that our students are adequately prepared to understand the content of the tests.

WHY DOES IT TAKE SO MUCH TIME TO GIVE THE TESTS?

The time element is not really a critical factor. For example, a Grade 3 student will spend approximately two hours writing the provincial test. When one considers that the tests are supposed to reflect the curriculum learning in the tested subject for the first three grades, two hours over a three-year period is somewhat minimal.

ARE NOT OTHER EVALUATION METHODS BETTER?

Yes, but for other purposes. In order for Alberta Education to be able to measure student achievement across the province, something standard must be used. Thus, we have the achievement tests.

To argue that informal evaluation is sufficient of itself as the sole measure of the learning that goes on in our classrooms holds no more credibility than the argument that achievement testing is the only true evaluation of our teaching endeavors. There is danger when one form of evaluation is given priority and emphasized as being the one and only method by which we judge.

Both forms of assessment are necessary to provide complete profiles of student learning. One form is not more valuable than the other. On the contrary, informal and formal compliment each other in assessing the breadth and depth of student achievement whether individually or as groups.

WHY DO I HAVE TO GIVE THE TESTS WHEN I CAN'T USE THE RESULTS FOR FINAL REPORT CARDS?

This is valid -- to a point. It is true that results, which are returned to the schools in September, cannot be used for evaluation in June. However, they can be used to determine if there are any gaps or strengths in our program.

Furthermore, the bulletin from Alberta Education actually states that the test results are not to be used to provide information for student placement or promotion. Results are sent to each respective school jurisdiction. A district profile, as well as individual student profiles are sent to the superintendents and principals of schools where students wrote the exams. No individual statements are sent to students. It becomes important then to have other assessment tools in place -- to demonstrate to students and their parents the progress that has been achieved.

I TEACH READING FROM MEANINGFUL WHOLE PASSAGES SO THAT STUDENTS CAN USE ALL THEIR CUEING SYSTEMS. HOW DOES THE TEST PROVIDE FOR THIS?

A test format may isolate specific skills in order to measure them. Alberta Education test developers are presently attempting to meet this concern by providing meaningful passages which are complete within the test — for example, poems or short stories.

CONCLUSION

There may always be tension about evaluation tools just as there are differences of opinion about various philosophies and methods of teaching reading and writing. However, if we believe in our philosophy of providing children with opportunities for meaningful language learning in our classrooms and if we believe that our wholistic approaches to instruction and learning encourage them to be competent users of language, student success on Provincial Achievement tests will highlight the worth of our programs.

If on the other hand, our results from the achievement tests do not reach acceptable standards, all our other forms of assessment will be called into question, making educational policy makers suspicious of our philosophies and the wholistic approaches we currently are using in our classrooms. By understanding why achievement tests are mandated, how they are developed, and what they involve, we may be, like our students, better prepared to test the metal of our beliefs and ensure continued success with these exciting language learnings in our classroom.

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